## Eat Me Instead

The amount of rubbish that spills out of children's lunchboxes is mind blowing. Lots of children take those small chip packets, muesli bars, or seaweed packets to school. They are all surrounded by plastic, and we all know plastic isn't good for the environment. What can we do to solve this avalanche of plastic that always ends up at landfill?

We went around our school to see how much plastic packaging each year group had on that day. Here is the data we collected from about 50 people: 18 chip packets, 5 seaweed

packets, 3 yoghurt pouches, 2 foil wrapping, 17 oat bars, 5 pieces of glad wrap. But we're not even finished! These were only students from Year 5/6.

When we collected the data from just about 30 Year 7/8 students, we realised that they even had more rubbish than the Year 5-6 students. They had 17 chip packets, 3 yoghurt pouches, 14 pieces



of gladwrap, 2 seaweed packets, 3 pieces of tissue and paper bags (not reusing), 1 foil wrapping, and 19 chocolate wrappers!

Plastic can take centuries to decompose, and there are more than 1.5 million children in New Zealand. Now, imagine if they all ate 1 or 2 small packets of some snack food a day. The effects of using plastic packaging are not good at all. Plastic causes bad pollution and it kills marine wildlife. Plastic causes substances to be let go into the soil. When plastic bags disintegrate beneath sunlight and if plastic bags are reduced to ashes, they release a toxic substance into the air causing air pollution. Plastic pollution threatens wildlife, differentiates ecosystems, and causes risks to human health. Plastic is a major contributor to both land and water pollution. When it's not properly disposed of, it can end up in our oceans and rivers, harming marine life. The plastic falls out of the rubbish bin, floats through puddles, goes into the gutter and we all know that the gutter leads to the ocean. It can also end up in landfills, where it takes centuries to decompose.

Every year, 12.59 million kilograms of waste goes to landfill in New Zealand. This includes chip packets, seaweed packets, oat bar packets, yoghurt pouches, sliced cheese, and more. We really need to stop this.

Like we said, these all can take centuries to decompose. Kiwis spend an average of 157 million dollars on only chippie packets! Some scientific predictions are saying that in the

year 2050 there could be more plastic than fish in the sea! Almost all these packed foods are unhealthy and bad for you. To help with this plastic avalanche in students' lunchboxes, we took the initiative to come up with alternatives that could be eaten instead. So, to solve this problem, we have a few recipes that will help to reduce the single-use plastic litter, save money and are fun to make. We have the link for these at the end of this article.

One of the main reasons for people buying packaged snacks is marketing. They are telling children that it's cool to eat those snacks. And since the packaging is normally colourful and cute,



children get attracted to it. Also on their packaging, it says that the food is somewhat "healthy". The fact is children from year 5 onwards could easily make their own snacks for their lunchboxes. They are old enough to do this! Some easy-to-make snacks can be roasted seaweed and chips, just with a little bit of help by an adult. Plus, they can always put some fruit and a sandwich by the side.

The recipes we have put down below are easy to make. If you try out these recipes, you will reduce the use of plastic, therefore avoid the negative effects like pollution. You can make these lunchbox snacks with your friends and family, plus you can have a fun time with your loved ones. Our recipes are money saving and help the environment. With our environment friendly recipes, you can take part in the importance of helping the planet. Plus, the recipes have delicious ingredients which were added with thought to make the snacks taste good.

You can see that plastic in lunchboxes doesn't do any good for the environment. Please check out the link at the bottom so you can see how to save money and how to save the environment with delicious alternatives. Keep New Zealand beautiful!

This article is by Koko, Sarrinah, and Avia Eat Me Instead

## Bibliography

How many children in NZ

How much waste goes to landfill

How much kiwis spend of chip packets

How much packaging is consumed in NZ

How much plastic straws are used in a year in NZ

Overflowing Lunch Box Picture